

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1229

By Turner M

A RESOLUTION to commend John Seigenthaler, Sr., for his honorable and astute service to the people of Tennessee as a journalist and public servant.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to specially recognize those estimable journalists who have dedicated themselves and their careers to bringing the truth to light for their fellow citizens to see; and

WHEREAS, John Seigenthaler, Sr., is one such estimable journalist who evinces the greatest integrity and probity in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, throughout his exemplary career as a journalist, writer, and political adviser, Mr. Seigenthaler has distinguished himself as a public-spirited citizen of the highest order and as an exceptional asset to his community and country; and

WHEREAS, a native of Nashville, John Seigenthaler graduated from Father Ryan High School before serving in the United States Air Force from 1946 to 1949; and

WHEREAS, following his military service, Mr. Seigenthaler began his illustrious journalism career in 1949 as a police beat reporter for Nashville's *The Tennessean*. This talented journalist soon distinguished himself as one of the staff's leading reporters, as he won a National Headliner Award in 1953 and earned a place in Harvard University's 1958 Nieman Fellowship program before being promoted to Assistant City Editor and Special Assignment Reporter; and

WHEREAS, resigning from *The Tennessean* in 1960, John Seigenthaler became an administrative assistant to United States Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, in which position he served as the federal government's chief negotiator with Alabama Governor John Malcolm Patterson during the tumultuous Freedom Rides of 1961. In this capacity, he was in Montgomery on May 20, 1961 and this passionate advocate of civil rights was knocked unconscious attempting to protect a Freedom Rider who was being chased by an angry mob; and

WHEREAS, in 1962, Mr. Seigenthaler returned to work at *The Tennessean* as the paper's Editor, and he was promoted to Publisher in 1973 in recognition of his supernal abilities, journalistic acumen, and unswerving commitment to justice; these qualities have earned him numerous awards throughout his journalism career, including the 1976 Sidney Hillman Prize for courage in publishing; and

WHEREAS, during a sabbatical from *The Tennessean*, John Seigenthaler worked as an adviser for Robert Kennedy's 1968 presidential campaign and, in recognition of the high esteem with which Robert Kennedy regarded Mr. Seigenthaler, he was a pallbearer at the Senator's funeral; and

WHEREAS, in 1982, John Seigenthaler, while continuing to work at *The Tennessean*, was named the founding Editorial Director of the newly founded *USA Today* and was integral in establishing it as one of the Nation's preeminent newspapers; his unparalleled journalistic accomplishments also elevated him to the position of President of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (1988-1989); and

WHEREAS, Mr. Seigenthaler retired from journalism in 1991, leaving both publications to establish the First Amendment Center, an institution based at Nashville's Vanderbilt University and in Arlington, Virginia, with the mission of creating national discussion, dialogue, and debate for the furtherance and preservation of First Amendment rights; and

WHEREAS, John Seigenthaler is also a Senior Advisory Trustee for the Freedom Forum, which is a nonpartisan foundation dedicated to free press, free speech, and free spirit; and

WHEREAS, this immensely talented gentleman has plied his numerous abilities and significant intellect as the host of the weekly book review television program *A Word on Words*, has authored several books, including *James K. Polk*, *The Year of the Scandal Called Watergate*, and *A Search for Justice*, and has co-edited the book *An Honorable Profession: A Tribute to Robert F. Kennedy*; and

WHEREAS, a consummate public servant, Mr. Seigenthaler was appointed to the National Commission on Federal Election Reform organized by Presidents Carter and Ford following the 2000 presidential election, has been a member of the Constitution Project on Liberty and Security, and has chaired the selection committees for the RFK Memorial's Robert

F. Kennedy Book Awards and the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation's Profile in Courage Award; and

WHEREAS, in acknowledgement of John Seigenthaler's many accomplishments and his lifelong commitment to fostering civil rights in our Nation, he has been recognized in numerous manners. In 1986 Middle Tennessee State University created the John Seigenthaler Chair of Excellence in First Amendment Studies; in 1996 Colby College named him the recipient of the Elijah Parish Lovejoy Award and awarded him an honorary Doctor of Laws', and Vanderbilt University christened the building on its campus at 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue South and Edgehill Avenue, which houses the offices of the Freedom Forum, the First Amendment Center, and the Diversity Institute, as the John Seigenthaler Center; and

WHEREAS, John Seigenthaler is an extremely giving person who often reaches out with compassion to people whom life has treated unkindly, and he epitomizes the ideal of the consummate journalist, dedicated public servant, and reliable friend and colleague; and

WHEREAS, his many accomplishments aside, Mr. Seigenthaler is fortunate to share both love and companionship with his wife, the former Dolores Watson, and their son, John Seigenthaler, Jr.; and

WHEREAS, John Seigenthaler is wholly committed to the noble precepts of journalistic integrity, and public service that have earned Tennessee recognition as the "Volunteer State," and he should be specially recognized; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby commend John Seigenthaler, Sr., for his honorable and astute service to the good people of Tennessee as a journalist and public servant, honor his many accomplishments in the realms of journalism free speech and civil rights, and salute his unswerving commitment to living the examined life with courage, conviction and liberality.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.